

VZCZCXRO2584
PP RUEHLMC
DE RUEHMU #0845/01 2391506
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 271506Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4493
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL//J2/J3/J5// PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000845

SIPDIS

STATE PASS USAID
DEPT FOR WHA/CEN KRAAIMOORE
DEPT FOR DRL MAGGIO & GARCIA
DEPT FOR INR/IIA ARCHUBTA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2019
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [ELAB](#) [EFIS](#) [KWMN](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: NICARAGUAN DEMOCRACY & INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S LEADER
WOUNDED BY POLICE

REF: MANAGUA 415 (MISKITO INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT)

Classified By: Ambassador Robert J. Callahan for reasons 1.4 (b & d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On June 9 in Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua's North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN), Miskito indigenous leader and democracy defender Marcela Davis was shot and wounded by Nicaraguan National Police (NNP) during a protest by Miskito lobster divers over falling lobster prices. The subsequent police investigation has been fraught with irregularities. Our contacts in the region, and Davis herself, believe that she was purposely targeted because of her opposition to the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and the indigenous Yatama party (allied with the FSLN) as well as her support for the recent indigenous independence movement (see reftel). We are unable to confirm the charge of an intended shooting, but it does not appear that the NNP is investigating the case with great enthusiasm. END SUMMARY

MARCELA DAVIS & FALLING LOBSTER PRICES

12. (C) Marcela Davis, a 45-year old Afro-Miskito Nicaraguan, is the leader of a women's co-op that supports lobster divers in the RAAN. She has also been a critical voice against the Yatama and FSLN political parties that control the region, and she supports the recent independence movement declared by the ad hoc Miskito Council of Elders (see reftel). The world-wide economic crisis has dramatically reduced the demand and prices for Nicaragua's Caribbean lobsters. Before the crisis, Miskito lobster divers could earn US\$4.00 a pound for the lobsters they caught; in June employers were offering lobster divers between US\$2.00 to \$2.50 a pound. The dramatic cut in prices was a huge hardship to this economically disadvantaged region and in particular to the lobster divers and the women's co-op that supports them.

DAY OF THE SHOOTING

13. (C) On June 9, Hector Williams, the Wihta Tara (Miskito for "great judge") and leader of the independence movement, called on Miskito lobster divers to protest announced cuts to lobster prices. Hundreds of Miskito lobster divers took over the main wharf in Puerto Cabezas (while unarmed NNP officers looked-on) after a two-hour meeting between the Wihta Tara

and the Nicaragua Navy commander broke down. The protestors occupied the wharf for a few hours, tipping over a couple of private vehicles before marching to the Central Park and then to the home of the largest lobster employer, Carlos Gaff. Davis, who participated in the march, said that when the protestors arrived near Mr. Gaff's home, a truck with 10 armed NNP officers was already parked outside. The protesters, upon seeing the armed police, stopped their march towards the Gaff home. Davis said that after a few moments and without warning there were two shots fired into the air. Then a female NNP officer fired twice at Davis, who was near the front of the crowd. The first shot entered below her right bicep, shattering the humerus bone, before exiting the back of her arm. (NOTE: Davis,s doctors believe that it was divine providence that the bullet ricocheted off her bone, or it would have entered her chest and killed her. END NOTE) In addition to Davis, two other protesters were wounded in the melee that followed. Four days of strikes and general unrest followed.

POLICE INVESTIGATION?

14. (C) The police maintain that they did not shoot Davis, but rather someone in the crowd did. However, the female NNP officer that allegedly shot Davis was immediately sent on vacation following the incident. X-rays confirmed that a police bullet struck Davis' arm, mysteriously disappeared from the Puerto Cabezas hospital. Within days of the shooting, Davis spoke with the women's police commissioner

MANAGUA 00000845 002 OF 002

about her case to no avail. One month later she met with police sub-commissioner Emilio Roche (Badge #1033) about the status of the investigation. Davis told us that during this meeting with the police "they tried to buy (her) off" with free food and asked her to "sign a document" that would release any liability on the police. Davis refused to accept the bribe or sign any document. She told us she has no hope of receiving justice in her case. She also suffers great pain from her wound, is now out of work, and has no way to support her four children and elderly mother.

15. (C) When we contacted the police station in Bilwi about the status of the police investigation, Commander Emilio Rodriguez was tight-lipped about it. He told us that the investigation has been in the Public Defender,s office since a week following the incident. However, he did not want to share any details about the case, specifically who the investigation was against.

COMMENT

16. (C) RAAN contacts believe that the initial shots by NNP officers were not provoked by the crowd; moreover, they tell us that it was no accident that Marcela Davis was specifically targeted from among a group of over 200-300 protestors. Our contacts believe that the FSLN purposely provoked the riot situation to use the Miskito diver protest as an opportunity to silence one of the region,s more vocal defenders of democracy and an outspoken critic of the Yatama-FSLN alliance. Of course, these contacts are strongly opposed to the FSLN and their Yatama allies which may color their judgment. Nonetheless, the possibility that Police intentionally fired upon an unarmed leader of an opposition group is extremely disturbing. We will closely monitor the ongoing investigation, such as it is.

CALLAHAN